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Higher Education and the State in Latin America: Private Challenges to Public Dominance by Daniel C. Levy

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this part of the book are laced with excerpts from correspondence to and from Wright. The controversy with Fisher over the evolution of dominance and the significance of random processes and population structure is described with some flair. So is the interaction between Wright and Dobzhansky, whose opposite personalities make this story one of the most interesting in the book. I enjoyed these chapters very much, but fear that someone not familiar with genetics and evolution would have a hard time following the text. The reason is that Provine sometimes assumes familiarity with the technical aspects of evolutionary biology. There is also a tendency to gloss over some historical points — for instance, little information is given about the background and intellectual development of R. A. Fisher (although quite a bit is given about Dobzhansky). Provine has written about these matters elsewhere and possibly, to avoid repeating himself, has left them out here. Overall, I had the feeling that this was a book meant for the cognoscenti, not for typical college students.

Provine's basic approach is chronological, but sometimes this gives way to a topical attack. The interspersing of topics and themes with the ongoing chronology is not always successful; one unfortunate consequence is that the book sometimes suffers from the repetition of items that appear in both the chronological and topical streams. Another fault is that the reader is frequently made conscious of the author's "presence." This happens because some of the interview material is reported in the first person, thus confusing Provine's role as a witness with his function as an interpreter. I do not think this is a serious flaw, but professional historians might regard it, at a minimum, as inelegant. There are a few stylistic shortcomings here and there, but overall the book is clearly and critically written.

Provine makes no secret of his admiration for Wright. The last sentence sums it up completely: "I predict that historians and biologists in the twenty-first century will look upon Wright as perhaps the single most influential evolutionary theorist of this century." On this conjecture Provine may be absolutely right.

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*Higher Education and the State in Latin America: Private Challenges to Public Dominance*, by Daniel C. Levy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986. xi + 434 pp. \$27.50

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This is certainly the most important book on Latin American higher education produced so far. Drawing on the author's previous experience on Mexico [1], the analysis of finance, governance, mission, and other important concerns is now expanded to Chile and Brazil, with a wealth of information and insights drawn from other countries. More significant than the exhaustive information gathering, however, is the integration of data into a conceptual

and global interpretation of the long-term transformations of the region's higher education systems.

At first glance, Levy's emphasis on the role of the private sector seems awkward. Latin American countries are believed to follow the Continental tradition of all-powerful, interventionist states; higher education in the region usually brings the image of the large, autonomous, free and highly politicized public universities in Mexico, Buenos Aires, São Paulo or Lima. In fact, almost all of the literature produced in Latin America about its higher education institutions relates to the public sector. Seen from this angle, private education seems to be just a minor aberration.

What we learn from Levy, however, is that this conventional view is just one side of the coin. Today, about a third of higher education enrollments in Latin America — and more than half in Colombia and Brazil — are in private institutions. In the past, private institutions were mostly Catholic, and their challenge to public education was part of the church's historical struggle to keep education under control. Today, however, Catholic universities are a minority within the private sector, most of which does not have a distinctive religious profile. Private higher education is additionally divided today in two broad, different subsectors. One is made up of those elite, rather expensive institutions that try to compensate for the disarray that overpoliticization, bureaucracy, and low budgets have brought to the public sector. At the other extreme there are those institutions which attract the students who cannot enter the public sector, either because they do not qualify or because they are older, employed, and able to study only at night. Whether one or the other variety prevails, depends very much on what happens with the public universities — whether they remain mostly as elite institutions, concerned with quality and relatively shut off from lower social groups, as in Brazil, or whether they open their doors, lose quality and selectiveness, and force the elite sectors to look for other educational alternatives, as in Peru or Mexico. In short, the book rightly analyzes two sectors (it is not only about the private sector), variations within each, and interactions between the two.

Levy also shows how the distinctiveness between the public and private sectors is not nearly as clear as one might expect. For example, the notion that Catholic universities are "private" is a consequence of the secularization of the state after independence; in Colonial times all "public" universities were also Catholic. There was an attempt to reestablish this close association between state and church in modern Colombia, and recent research has shown that a similar project was tried by the Vargas government in Brazil during the thirties [2]. As these attempts failed, the church went on with its independent educational projects, which very often relied strongly on public support. Public support for private education has occurred, in part, because of the church's political influence, but also because it has been possible to argue convincingly that these nominally private institutions in fact perform a socially meaningful role.

Levy writes about three different waves of privatization, the first related to the Catholic institutions, the others predominantly secular, especially in the case of the second wave, and related to more clearly private, capitalist sectors. He also shows how these differences, and private-public differences generally,

are far from uniform. In many cases Catholic universities cater to social strata that cannot reach the public institutions, while traditional Catholicism is replaced by post-Vatican II political awareness. These institutions see themselves as performing significant social and community work, and claim for public support. In other cases private institutions, Catholic or not, specialize in elite education and research, performing roles that the overburdened public universities cannot fulfill, and can therefore also sometimes claim and obtain public support. But much depends on the field of study; the public sector remains dominant in both enrollments and quality in natural and medical sciences, for example. At the same time, the degree of autonomy achieved by many public universities has led to relative inability of their governments to actually be influential in their normal activities, which puts a question mark on the true sense of the word "public."

Higher education in Latin America now faces a series of challenges — how to continue to expand its enrollments, how to keep and improve quality, how to develop research and graduate education — all this in a context of intense politicization and limited resources. This book helps us to realize that, contrary to common belief, the state is relatively weak in its ability to lead this process, and the end result may be much more complex than the simple opposition between "public" and "private" education could suggest.

### References

1. Levy, D. C. *University and Government in Mexico: Autonomy in an Authoritarian System*. New York: Praeger, 1980.
2. Schwartzman, S., M. H. Bomeny, and V. Costa. *Tempos de Capanema*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Paz e Terra, 1984.

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*Effective Teaching and Mentoring: Realizing the Transformational Power of Adult Learning Experiences*, by Laurent A. Daloz.  
San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1986. xxii + 256 pp. \$21.95

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In authoring *Effective Teaching and Mentoring*, Laurent Daloz has given voice to issues and concerns of considerable importance to adults returning to academic and vocational programs in postsecondary institutions. The essential perspective taken by the author is a developmental one. Adults return to school not only for vocational and economic reasons, but also as a way of trying to gain some understanding of certain life issues or questions that are significant to them. Further, educational programs that facilitate the individual's encounter with these developmental issues are more likely to be productive of motivation for learning, of personal growth, and eventually of vocational and professional development. In this perspective mentoring becomes